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NSC/DEPUTIES COMMITTEE MEETING

SOUTH AFRICA POLICY REVIEW (NSR-15)

Wednesday, 20
~~Monday~~, 18 September 1989

1500 - 1600

WHSR

Prebrief, 19 Sept 415



Office of the Deputy Director for Intelligence

14 September 1989

NOTE FOR:

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You are scheduled to attend a Deputies Committee meeting on NSR-15 (South Africa) on ~~Monday~~ *Wednesday*

ALA had a typescript in the works which they thought you might want to read to prep yourself for the session.

I have a second copy of the typescript which [] will review today. STAT have the copy with the Product Review Record.)

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Attachment:

ALA Typescript

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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

13 September 1989

SOUTH AFRICA: Prospects for Negotiating Fundamental Political
Change
Summary

Deep mistrust and fundamentally different goals will continue to impede serious negotiations between Pretoria and popular representatives of the black majority for some time. Pretoria most likely has raised the prospect of negotiations with blacks as a way to minimize domestic and international pressure as it proceeds with its program of gradual reform. The National Party is likely to pursue a long-term approach to black political participation that falls far short of even minimal black demands. At the same time,

This typescript was prepared by [] Africa Division, Office of African and Latin American Analysis. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, Africa Division, ALA,

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however, Pretoria recognizes that failure to satisfy raised expectations of major policy changes risks triggering a new and even more violent wave of black protest and international condemnation. [REDACTED]

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The black opposition--which has borne the brunt of Pretoria's repressive measures--remains highly skeptical of the government's intentions. Some black leaders, however, acknowledge the possibility that the government might decide to talk seriously and are seeking new alliances and strategies to regain the offensive. They clearly believe it is up to Pretoria to create a climate for negotiations by lifting the state of emergency, releasing political prisoners, and legalizing black political organizations. [REDACTED]

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Neither the government nor the black opposition is prepared for the risks inherent in earnest negotiations. For talks to lead to a lasting settlement, or even to begin seriously, both sides would have to make major concessions and then sell them to their respective constituencies--unlikely developments in our view because of the overriding fears of whites and the growing politicization of blacks. Premature negotiations, possibly brokered by outside parties, that end abruptly without an agreement might only harden attitudes on both sides. On the

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other hand, the current debates--among blacks and whites--over how and what to negotiate are likely to have a positive impact on South Africa's long-term political development.

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Is There a Climate for Talks?

A number of domestic and international developments have created high expectations that negotiations on South Africa's racial crisis are now possible. The National Party's significantly narrowed parliamentary majority--along with strong performances by both the rightwing Conservative Party and the pro-reform Democratic Party in recent elections--probably will convince many Nationalists of the need to address seriously the concerns of liberal white English-speaking voters. NP leader and new President F. W. de Klerk has stated his intention to move forward with modest reform initiatives in consultation with black leaders. Former President Botha's meeting in July with jailed African National Congress (ANC) leader Nelson Mandela raised new hopes--in South Africa and internationally--of immediate further steps toward black-white dialogue. In addition, Pretoria's decision to accept Namibian independence has convinced some that the government is committed to the resolution of conflict through negotiation. At the same time, Pretoria's direct contacts with Cuba, the Soviet Union, and black African states--including

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Angola--have lessened its isolation, but also increased pressure on the government and opposition groups to moderate their positions. [REDACTED]

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On the other hand, Pretoria has done little to persuade blacks that its adherence to a policy of continued white control has changed. The government is moving ahead with many aspects of its old game plan of tough security and a government-controlled forum for negotiations. Pretoria has reacted harshly to the opposition's defiance campaign against the state of emergency and segregated elections that are open to all racial groups but blacks. The government has also continued to transfer territory to the so-called "independent" homelands--depriving thousands of blacks of their South African citizenship--and has vowed to preserve white residential areas and schools. Black leaders thus conclude that Pretoria's talk of reform and negotiations is a ploy to win the support of homeland leaders and black local government officials who have little popular support. [REDACTED]

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Pretoria's Strategy

The National Party leadership probably is not of one mind on the issues of when, how, and what to negotiate with blacks. Former President Botha's recent confrontation with de Klerk over the latter's visit to Zambia to talk to President Kaunda--and Botha's subsequent resignation--suggests there may be sharp differences within the party, despite the cabinet's public backing of de Klerk. Pretoria's positive signals on the

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possibility of negotiations probably reflect the coincidence of several factors:

- On the domestic front, Pretoria is confident it has regained the initiative and can control the pace of events. Despite the recent resurgence of mass protest, opposition organization has been weakened, and many activists are tired from several years of restriction, detention, and hardship.
- Notwithstanding its recent election losses to the Democratic Party, the National Party has used reform and negotiation rhetoric to shore up its position among more liberal white voters.
- The government has learned that it is cheaper to talk than to reform. Pretoria's plan to co-opt blacks economically has failed largely because whites object to the high price tag of black upliftment as their own standard of living goes down. Meanwhile, blacks have continued to demand political rights.
- Pretoria believes it can manipulate and split the black opposition. The government almost certainly used the meeting between Botha and Mandela in July to try to divide the ANC over the issue of violence. Pretoria also is likely to try to take advantage of the disarray caused by ANC president Tambo's stroke in August to exacerbate tensions within the group between those favoring and those opposed to negotiation.

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- Pretoria hopes to build upon its new acceptance in the region, including de Klerk's meetings with Mozambican President Chissano and Zambian President Kaunda. South Africa has moved quickly to strengthen its economic ties with Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and other Frontline States.
- Almost certainly, a prime consideration in Pretoria's signals on negotiations is the international public relations bonanza and financial benefits likely to come from such a process, at least initially. Pretoria is undoubtedly concerned about South Africa's hefty short-term debt repayment obligations--some \$13 billion due by mid-1990--and about potential moves toward tougher trade sanctions at the Commonwealth meeting in October.1 [REDACTED]

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The National Party's change of leaders, from the autocratic P.W. Botha to the more pragmatic consensus-seeker F.W. de Klerk, undoubtedly is seen by de Klerk as an opportunity to take advantage of recent events to set his own positive image at home and abroad. Nevertheless, the party is entering the de Klerk era with its smallest parliamentary majority in years. Moreover, de Klerk has no real voter or party mandate to negotiate far-reaching political change, even though the recent election would have been the natural time to seek such a mandate. We believe de

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Klerk is essentially conservative and remains firmly committed to the concept of group rights. He has accepted the need for blacks to participate in political decisionmaking on all levels of government which affect their interests, but subject to the principle of "no domination," a phrase long used by Nationalist politicians to signal continued white control. Although he may be willing to test the limits of narrow traditional Afrikaner thinking, de Klerk is unlikely to go outside this framework, and thus probably will fall well short of expectations raised among blacks and the international community. National Party officials most likely believe that a sincere attempt by them to initiate wide-ranging negotiations would be political suicide, creating a major schism in Nationalist ranks that would bring the Conservative Party to power. [REDACTED]

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A Blueprint? The National Party's vague public statements about its reform plans make it difficult to evaluate how far it is willing to go to accommodate black political aspirations. In the five-year reform manifesto spelled out in the National Party's recent election campaign, the NP committed itself to "make a definite start" on creating new structures in which all racial groups could participate. However, the manifesto--presumably the basis for negotiations--would preserve the main pillars of apartheid, including the Group Areas Act and the Population Registration Act. Elaborating on the manifesto, de Klerk has suggested that blacks may be accommodated in central government bodies, perhaps even including a single parliament elected on a

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group basis to deal with "general affairs"--including economic and foreign policies--at the national level. According to government officials, racially-defined local and regional government bodies would continue to dominate "own affairs,"--including education and housing--with wide scope to deal with the affairs of each racial group. The concept of "own affairs" would be extended by further devolution of power from central government to "regional, area, or group governments." New features would include the possible allowance for an "open" group, whose only qualification would be South African citizenship and willingness to consider a federal government system, and which might eventually allow some form of nonracial representation in government structures. According to the NP, details of a new political dispensation must be worked out in negotiations, but the current parliament would retain the sole power to amend the constitution. [REDACTED]

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Apart from its public pronouncements, Pretoria probably lacks a precise gameplan, and senior officials undoubtedly differ over how far to pursue talks. Some National Party leaders probably believe that an advantageous interim deal can be cut with "moderate" black leaders. Pretoria, for example, has intensified discussions with Zulu chief Buthelezi and agreed to reconsider plans for a multiracial government joining Natal Province and the KwaZulu homeland that it had rejected in 1986. In addition, Pretoria is proceeding with plans for a constitutional advisory council--to include leaders of the non-

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independent homelands, provincial officials, members of the white, Colored, and Indian houses of parliament, cabinet members, and appointees of the state president--despite its clear lack of support among blacks. Other National Party politicians probably believe that a controlled process could be started that would drag on for some time and eventually fall apart after reducing pressure on the government to give up power. Most National Party officials favor slow, orderly reform that will continue to safeguard white interests. [REDACTED]

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Dealing With Mandela. The release of jailed ANC leader Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners is generally considered to be the foundation of any negotiating effort. The circumstances will be just as important as the release itself, however. Recognizing that Mandela's freedom is essential to any government plan to proceed with reform, de Klerk may partially lift the state of emergency in the wake of the election in an effort to find a way to free the ANC leader [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Pretoria doubtless will attempt to manipulate the release to advance its own agenda--winning new international respectability and coopting homeland and other black leaders into its reform process. Some National Party members favor Mandela's release as a way to circumvent the Mandela "myth" and divide the black opposition. [REDACTED]

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Former President Botha's meeting with Mandela in July, and Pretoria's apparent decision to accept his "commitment to peace" rather than continue to insist that he renounce violence,

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probably set a precedent for official contacts with the ANC in the future. Nevertheless, by contrasting Mandela's commitment to peace with the current policies of the ANC, de Klerk has attempted to shift the burden to the ANC to follow Mandela's lead and become part of the "peaceful negotiation process." The government claims that the ANC's support is over-rated, and de Klerk has said he will not allow the ANC and other radicals to undermine the legitimacy of black leaders willing to deal with the government. [REDACTED]

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Opposition Response

As the leading black opposition group, the ANC has decided that it must be more flexible and pragmatic in its approach to negotiations. As a result, it may be willing to enter into "talks about talks" if Pretoria creates a "climate for talks" short of meeting ANC demands for Mandela's release and the unbanning of political groups. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Some in the ANC executive committee believe that recent discussions between Mandela and senior government officials are the beginning of such a process.

[REDACTED] however, the ANC still must persuade its supporters inside South Africa that negotiations would not represent a sell-out to the government. Moreover, all opposition leaders continue to stress that negotiation is only

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one of many tactics, including continued civil disobedience and international pressure on the regime. [REDACTED]

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The ANC Negotiating Plan. The ANC is attempting to formulate its own agenda for negotiations, in consultation with the Mass Democratic Movement and the Frontline States, in order to regain the initiative and shore up its international support. The ANC hopes to forestall an effort by British Prime Minister Thatcher to take the lead with an internationally-backed initiative at the Commonwealth meeting in October. Black leaders fear that a Thatcher initiative, probably centered around Mandela's release, would not yield far-reaching political change and would dissipate international pressure on Pretoria. [REDACTED]

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The ANC recently presented the Frontline States and the OAU with a proposal for a transitional government in South Africa in which the ANC and the National Party government would be equal partners. The proposal also calls for free and fair elections for a constituent assembly--similar to the United Nations plan in Namibia--that would draw up a new constitution. The ANC undoubtedly expects that Pretoria's rejection of the proposal would boost support for ANC calls for additional international pressures--including financial sanctions--against the government.

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[REDACTED]

The ANC's initiatives so far fall short of suspending violence, thus providing Pretoria with an excuse--if it wants one--not to talk. The ANC leadership is divided on the issue, and the recent incapacitation of the ANC's leading moderate--

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President Tambo--could prompt a leadership struggle that at best probably would not be resolved until the ANC's consultative congress next year. This would further hamper the group's ability to present a united front on issues such as a negotiating strategy and suspension of the armed struggle. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] the ANC had been considering a suspension of violence to place the onus on Pretoria to lift the state of emergency and release political prisoners, but ANC military leaders recently announced intentions to intensify the armed struggle. Many in the ANC believe that continued military pressure helps keep South African whites interested in political change. In addition, an ANC decision to adopt a less militant stance probably would alienate many young activists in South Africa. [REDACTED]

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Challenging Pretoria. Black South Africans believe Pretoria would not consider negotiations if it did not feel pressured to do so. According to the ANC, Pretoria is "immersed in a deepening political and economic crisis" that is forcing the government to negotiate. For example, many opposition leaders are convinced that government progress toward negotiations can be attributed to international economic pressure, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

The opposition's current defiance campaign is intended to test Pretoria's good faith or expose its reformist rhetoric as a sham designed to lull the international community. Opposition leaders have defied their restriction orders, including

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proscriptions against political activity, and have scheduled a conference of antiapartheid groups in October to formulate a united position on terms and conditions of negotiations with the government. Pretoria has reacted by banning protests against state of emergency restrictions and petty apartheid laws, and arresting several opposition activists. Some radical activists may hope the ambitious defiance campaign will sour the improving climate for negotiations [redacted] They probably fear that the opposition is prepared to make too many concessions to Pretoria. A renewed government crackdown would almost certainly improve the standing of militant blacks who oppose negotiations. [redacted]

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Trying to Woo Whites. The ANC has acted aggressively to broaden the base of internal antiapartheid resistance well into the white community. The ANC's encounters with a broad spectrum of whites, including prominent Afrikaners and political leaders such as proreform Democratic Party co-leader Wynand Malan, have legitimized dialogue with the group and elevated its standing and credibility at home and abroad. The ANC leadership has enhanced its moderate and pragmatic image, particularly regarding negotiations. Despite complaints by some blacks that the ANC is devoting too much time to courting white opinion at their expense, the ANC will continue to encourage meetings with South African whites in Lusaka where it is based. The meetings serve both to reassure whites of the ANC's moderation and divide and disrupt the white ruling elite. Although Pretoria has continued

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publicly to condemn all such contacts with the ANC in exile, it has not acted decisively to stop them and, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] tries to stay well informed on the substance of the discussions. [REDACTED] a National Party official stated that the government's toleration of meetings between Afrikaners and ANC representatives is a tactical move to fuel dissension within the ANC. [REDACTED]

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Seeking Unity. Black leaders, aware that rivalries between opposition groups have been their biggest weakness, are striving to unite the opposition movement against the government. The Mass Democratic Movement (MDM)--an opposition alliance including the ANC, the United Democratic Front (UDF), the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), and the South African Council of Churches (SACC)--is working to forge a broad coalition of antiapartheid groups to challenge the state of emergency and to formulate a negotiating position. A prominent UDF leader claims that key opposition groups and trade unions have agreed to mend past differences and unite in an unprecedented antiapartheid front [REDACTED]

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Although opposition leaders intend to convene a negotiating strategy conference in October, there is still disagreement over who should be included in the antiapartheid alliance. Supporters of the MDM believe that it should be open to all South Africans who share certain goals, including a one person/one vote democracy, a minimum wage, and the repeal of all apartheid legislation. Other black political groups hold that only those with unquestioned antiapartheid

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credentials should attend, a deliberate attempt to exclude business interests and Zulu Chief Buthelezi's Inkatha organization. Mandela has called for cooperation with church leaders, Inkatha, and traditional tribal chiefs. [REDACTED]

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Many obstacles remain to a united black opposition, including sharp differences in goals and tactics. Some UDF leaders are concerned by the increasingly dominant--and moderate--role played by the ANC in formulating a negotiating strategy for the black majority. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Nevertheless, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] the UDF is trying to reassert itself on the political

scene to ensure that it has a primary role in any future negotiations, and to maintain a high level of black political activism. [REDACTED]

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some UDF leaders are concerned by the increasing militance of many black youths who reject the ANC's newfound moderation and are eager to launch school protests and street demonstrations.² [REDACTED]

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Even black consciousness advocates--including the exiled Pan Africanist Congress, the Azanian People's Organization, and the National Council of Trade Unions--have adopted a new pragmatism to ensure their continued relevance in any process of negotiations. These groups lack the extensive organizational network of the MDM, but they retain substantial grassroots support and probably could scuttle any negotiating process that did not include them. Although many black consciousness leaders remain wedded to their hardline socialist ideology, the growing international prominence of the ANC has led them to moderate their stance. Nevertheless, most black consciousness supporters do not favor negotiations with Pretoria until a united black opposition can sit at the table on equal terms with the government.

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Tentative Outreach to Buthelezi. The opposition has also taken steps to reconcile with Zulu Chief Buthelezi, who has been ostracized for "collaborating" with the government and for his frequent denunciations of the ANC's military campaign. The effort is intended to end black factional violence in Natal province and broaden the alliance against the government.

ANC-UDF-COSATU-Inkatha

talks have had enormous significance for anti-apartheid politics in general, but the MDM remains highly suspicious of Buthelezi's intentions. the ANC is concerned that the government will draw Buthelezi into negotiations without ANC participation. A meeting between Buthelezi and leaders of ANC, UDF, and COSATU to approve an agreement to end the factional violence has been postponed until at least October.

Buthelezi's stature has been enhanced by UDF and COSATU acknowledgment of his position in Natal and their reconciliation efforts. Mandela has played a central role in engineering the tentative easing of tensions.

Although Buthelezi continues to insist

that he will not participate in negotiations with the government until Mandela is released, he has not ruled out joining in negotiations with Pretoria that would exclude the ANC. He believes Mandela must have the opportunity to participate in any interim government body, but probably does not believe the ANC would approve. For its part, Pretoria probably would attempt to

scuttle an alliance between Buthelezi and the MDM that threatened its reform plans. [REDACTED]

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And Mandela? Mandela has rejected government attempts to make his release the centerpiece of its negotiating effort. He has stated that his release would be only an element of a broader government effort to create a climate for negotiations, and he has urged Pretoria to negotiate with the Mass Democratic Movement led by the ANC. Following his meeting with Botha, Mandela was careful to reassure the Movement that he had not been manipulated or coopted by the government. Senior government officials have been meeting with Mandela for some time to try to devise a formula for his release [REDACTED] Mandela has rejected a release conditioned on his restriction from political activity or banishment to a homeland. If Pretoria fails to release Mandela into a negotiating process, for example, by refusing to simultaneously meet minimal black demands such as lifting restrictions on black political leaders and lifting the state of emergency, black anger and violence are likely to rise.

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Outlook

De Klerk will be hard pressed to sustain--and control--expectations of a fundamentally new political era in South Africa at a time when he is also attempting to consolidate his own power within the party and among the white electorate. The National Party maintained its parliamentary majority in the 6 September election, but de Klerk has probably been sobered by the

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Conservatives' strong performance. Although he claims the party received a mandate for reform, de Klerk is likely to try and dampen expectations for dramatic and immediate political changes. To convince the black opposition and Western observers of his willingness to enter into serious negotiations with credible black leaders, we believe de Klerk would have to unban the ANC, lift the state of emergency, free all political prisoners, and allow opposition groups to organize freely. But, in view of what we believe is the unwillingness of most South African whites to end effective white political and economic control, we see no indication that de Klerk would take all of these steps, or that he could survive politically if he tried to do so. [REDACTED]

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Instead, de Klerk in the coming months may make important symbolic gestures, including the release of Mandela, that fall far short of the opposition's preconditions for negotiations but that bolster his image as a reformer. De Klerk probably will plead for time to consolidate his power base within the National Party and formulate his cabinet. He may tell Western governments privately that he cannot move quickly while the white electorate is still adjusting to the idea of Namibian independence, particularly prior to the November election there. As a result, attention may shift to his first opening-of-parliament speech early in 1990 as a natural opportunity for him to spell out his plans more fully. [REDACTED]

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De Klerk's ability to stage-manage the expectations of nervous South African whites, an increasingly politicized black

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population, and impatient international observers will be affected by several factors beyond his control. If, for example, the defiance campaign continues over the coming weeks or months, de Klerk most likely will assert that he must reestablish order before moving ahead with reform or lifting the state of emergency. More generally, Pretoria probably considers the tough security restrictions vital to contain opposition activity that might arise as a result of Mandela's release or of government efforts to talk only with "moderate" blacks. [REDACTED]

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Another element beyond de Klerk's control is the leadership transition in the ANC, which will seriously affect the group's ability to formulate a negotiating consensus. The longstanding power struggle between the ANC's political and military wings has been aggravated recently by the organization's setbacks in the region, including the loss of its military camps in Angola and Lusaka's request that it significantly reduce its cadre in Zambia. Pretoria may attempt to use Mandela's release to exacerbate the split within the ANC. On the other hand, Mandela's release might unify and galvanize the organization, providing a figure around whom the different factions could rally. [REDACTED]

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Although we believe that significant progress toward genuine black powersharing is unlikely in the near future, de Klerk may be able to sustain a positive climate through informal contacts and "talks about talks" with the ANC and other black leaders. While the barriers to dialogue are substantial and cannot be

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broken down quickly, the informal talks would serve to start the process and educate the participants. The white community is slowly becoming accustomed to the idea of accommodating blacks politically. Blacks must still overcome their fundamental distrust of the white government's intentions while they cement efforts at black unity. [REDACTED]

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The beginning of an open-ended process could also create opportunities for outside players to exert positive influence on both sides.³ Pretoria, in particular, will be looking to the international community for signs of encouragement as it takes politically controversial steps, such as releasing Mandela. The government recognizes it cannot move forward with its reform program under the economic burden of tightening sanctions. The opposition already has been forced by international pressures to formulate a more realistic approach to negotiations and a future political settlement. [REDACTED]

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Nevertheless, the failure of preliminary negotiations to lead to more substantive talks quickly could strengthen those at both the white and black extremes who oppose negotiated change. The potential for frustration and violence will increase if Pretoria's slow pace of reform fails to fulfill black and international expectations. [REDACTED]

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